

**WILKES-BARRE CITY**

**Thomas M. Leighton**  
Mayor



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**PENNSYLVANIA**

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*House Local Government Committee: House Bill 2018*  
*February 20, 2008*  
*Testimony - Mayor Thomas M. Leighton*

As Mayor of the City of Wilkes-Barre, I believe that this new bill, and the subsequent creation of the Tax-exempt Property Municipal Assistance Act, will benefit our community through the generation of additional funds. Over 20% of the assessed parcels in the City of Wilkes-Barre are not taxable; however, over 50% of the total number of parcels in the city, which include government buildings, churches, synagogues and parking garages, are tax-exempt. This high percentage of non-taxable entities puts us at a financial disadvantage.

Since taking office, maintaining fiscal responsibility has been a cornerstone of my administration. Without a solid financial foundation, the City of Wilkes-Barre's future would be unsteady. Each year, we are committed to creating a balanced budget so that we can continue on a positive path to the future.

Like many other mid-sized cities nationwide, our financial climate has been difficult, with decreasing revenues and growing expenditures. The additional funds we could

receive as a result of this legislation – estimated to be upwards of \$100,000 – would be very beneficial, used to support existing city services, expand infrastructure upgrades or develop new projects throughout the city

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the generosity of our non-profits who contribute payment in lieu of taxes. These colleges, hospitals, government entities and parks add to the outstanding quality of life in Wilkes-Barre. While they do not directly contribute to our tax base, they are strong partners of the City of Wilkes-Barre and we are grateful for their support

With Wilkes-Barre's progress over the past four years, people have a renewed interest in the city and the innovative opportunities it presents. The additional funding created by the Tax-exempt Property Municipal Assistance Act would enable the City of Wilkes-Barre to continue with plans for our city's social and economic renaissance